recharging possibilities, as also to ensure social equity. The policy also provides that ground water recharge projects should be developed and implemented for augmenting the available supplies and that the integrated and coordinated development of surface water and ground water and their conjunctive use should be envisaged right from the project planning stage. It recognises the need to make water available to water short areas by transfer from other areas including transfer from one river basin to another, based on a national perspective, after taking into account the requirements of the areas/basins.

In order to meet the water demand for agricultural purposes, Government of India has been extending financial assistance under Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme since 1996-97 to State Governments to help them complete the ongoing irrigation projects early. Government of India is also promoting rain water harvesting through Watershed Management Programme, artificial recharge of ground water and roof-top rain water harvesting under the sector reform project of Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme under the Ministry of Rural Development, for which technical and financial assistance is provided to the State Government and other implementing agencies. Central Ground Water Board has also taken up pilot studies for artificial recharge of ground water. For meeting future requirements of water, as a long term measure, National Water Development Agency have formulated National perspective Plan for water resources development which envisages interlinking between various Peninsular rivers and Himalayan rivers for transfer of water from surplus basins to water deficit basins.

Saline water intrusion in Kerala

*67. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Ground Water Board has initiated studies on increasing saline water intrusion in the coastal belts of Kerala;

(b) if so, the details of the area of the coastal belt affected by salinity intrusion, district-wise;

(c) whether there is an increase in saline water intrusion into the well water especially in Alapuzha and Emakulam districts during summer seasons; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and the remedial measures taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI): (a) to (d) The Central Ground Water Board has initiated studies on

saline water intrusion in the coastal areas of Alleppey, Ernakulam, Kolam and Thiruvananthapuram districts of Kerala out of which, studies in Alleppey and Ernakulam districts have been completed. As per the studies, no areas have been observed as affected by saline water intrusion except that the areas very close to the sea and backwater channels extending to a maximum of 100 metre ground water is affected by salinity to a very limited extent during summer season. Similarly, saline water intrusion in well water has not been observed except very close to sea and backwater channels. The limited saline water intrusion in areas very close to the sea and backwater channels during summer cannot be attributed to the overdraft of ground water.

As there is no saline water intrusion, no remedial measures are needed. However, the Central Ground Water Board has organised mass awareness programmes in Ernakulam district of Kerala to create awareness among the public about the ill effects of ground water overdraft, pollution etc.

SBI Home Finance Limited

*68. SHRIMATI CHANDRA KALA PANDEY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any decision has been taken to scale down /close the operation of SBI Home Finance Limited;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) if not, the status of its operation; and

(d) the action taken to protect the interest of the employees in the Company?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) According to State Bank of India (SBI) the Board of Directors of the SBI Home Finance Ltd. (SBIHFL) have taken a decision to scale down its operations gradually.

(b) SBIHFL has been incurring losses continuously since 1997-98 resulting in complete erosion of its net worth. The refusal of the institutional shareholders to infuse additional capital, high level of non performing assets and heavy interest burden due to acceptance of high cost public deposits have adversely affected the viability of SBIHFL.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Employees have not been adversely effected. Hence no action is required in this regard.